

Allen Smith #52
February 12, 1985

Q: Mr. Smith, when did you first join the Fire Department?

A: In 1939.

Q: What station were you assigned to?

A: Central.

Q: Were you still at Central Station on the day of the Pearl Harbor attack?

A: No, I was transferred to Kakaako(??) Engine number... truck number nine.

Q: What were you doing when the attack began?

A: I going to the market for the meals for the day. I just come back and found out that we were being attacked.

Q: Did your Company get a call to respond?

A: Yeah, we responded to uh... I forgotten... anyway it was King and... King and (unclear), buildings.

Q: What was the situation over there?

A: They had dropped a bomb right through the building.

Q: What kind of damage was there?

A: Ah, just superficial.

Q: Was there a fire?

A: It was a small fire. But we were sent back by the Chief because we were needed at that time. Number One and Number Two took care of that fire.

Q: So, did you go back to Kakaako then?

A: Yes, we went back... back and started to cook and then the Stanley Livingston (??) told me, "Do you want to volunteer to go to Hickam Field?" I said, "Yes, I will." So then I shut everything off and I went to see the Asst. Cook according to finish it up you know. Say, "O.K." Got in a two-ton Ford. We go down to (unclear) and we go down to Hickam. We had a heck of a time getting in. We lucky we had the Department car. All we had was our own caps on; that's the uniform. We were in desert clothes (??) not in uniform; clothes that we used to work on our night instead of our various days.

Q: What did you find when you got down to Hickam?

A: The place look like a slaughter house to me. I been there a week previously visiting the firemen at Hickam. But it was just a disaster; all bombed out and the wagons are pumping from a hole in the ground made by a bomb. You know they busted the main.... the water mains. You know I saw all friends and fellow firemen fighting fire. They were just like seeing a lost friend. There was a talk about a planes coming back from behind a (unclear)??; nothing happens. I don't think might I was told.

Q: When you were there did you see... were there still bodies on the ground?

A: Oh yeah, there were bodies all over the place. They had arms and legs in a trash barrels.

Q: Were there fires still going?

A: Yes, they had fires going in the hangar and various other places.

Q: Were you able to hook up your wagon to take it back to the station.

A: Yes, we left there about... the first one we took out was about 2:00 and then we went back for the other one. We got there after 4:00 (remainder of sentence unclear)

Q: Did it take a long time to get back to the Station?

A: Traffic was congested but I had my lights on. My other (unclear) and every once in awhile turn on the fire bell you know. (unclear) cause luckily we had known the police yah, doing the traffic there.

Q: Did you have your siren on too?

A: No.

Q: How badly damaged were the Engines that you brought back?

A: Well two of them the motors were shot out. Then we went right to work on it when we got back. Worked when it was light; couldn't put the lights on.

Q: Why was that?

A: Oh you had practice 'black out' and the Governor had declared black out for that night until the War ended.

Q: It must have been pretty tough to work under 'black out' like that.

A: Yeah. We went to a fire at Elk's Club (someone...) came in. Took us from Kakaako to Waikiki to reach the destination, only 5

minutes. You know they had painted the lower half of the lights on the apparatus and the upper half showed but you have a little shield over it too keep it down. So you know I rode on the fender and I would holler, "Go to your left!" knowing it was close to the cab you know. And we weren't traveling fast; we was just going 25-40 miles. I know about the speed limits anyway.

Q: When you went down to Hickam on the day of the attack and you saw all that death and destruction, how did you feel?

A: Luckily, you know prior to my coming to fires, I worked at the hospital... emergency hospital, so I was used to all this stuff. I could stand it. But the other guy, had to throw up and I thought Jesus, what a sight... You often wonder how some people can take it and some cannot. In my previous training I seen a lot or blood, accidents... car accidents. You know the reason I went down to Kakaako because one of the fire captains, Capt. Mehner brought back a resuscitator.

Q: Capt. who?

A: Mehner.

Q: How do you spell his last name?

A: Mehner.

Q: Had brought back a...?

A: Resuscitator. It was one, two, three, I think four of us standing around at that time. This was '39. I guess that the Chief had a idea that I knew how to operate it. It was a must at the hospital. So when I got there on my watch, nobody knew how to operate that thing. So every time they ask me to explain to employees. I told look all you doing is doing artificial respiration, but chemically with this thing. That's all you gotta think about. We... if my grand (??) leader what we would do or should do, I told them part of artificial respiration that's all I know.

Q: What's probably the thing that is your strongest memory of the Dec. 7th attack?

A: (something??) and the guys that operated on the fire, you know. You fight the fire on the fire and that stuff (something??)

Q: Well, do you have anything else you want to add?

A: No, I guess that's it.

Q: O.K., well, I thank you very much.

A: You trying to write a book you say?

Q: This is going to be... the tape is going to be kept in an archives...

A: Oh I see.

Q: for people who want to study the Pearl Harbor attack and who want to write about it.

A: I see.